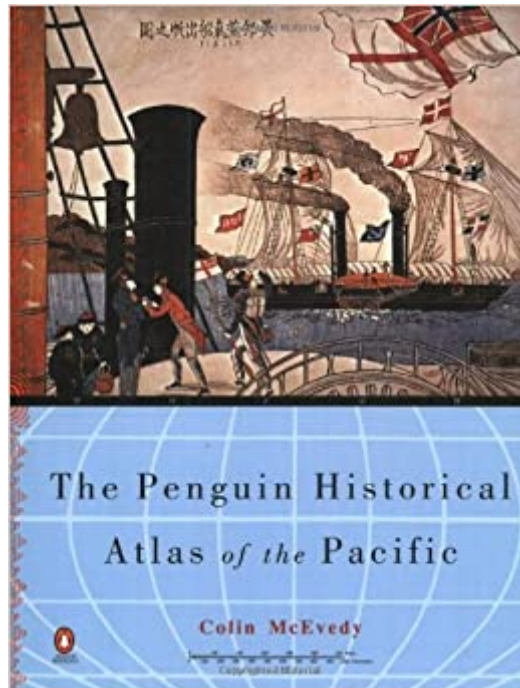




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The Penguin Historical Atlas Of The Pacific (Hist Atlas)



Synopsis

Through the use of historical maps the author outlines the history of the Pacific. Topics covered include: the first colonizations; the movements of the Polynesians; the voyages of Magellan and the Elizabethan circumnavigators Drake and Cavendish; Tasman's discovery of Tasmania, New Zealand and Fiji; Cook and the mapping of Australia, the discovery of Hawaii and exploration of the Arctic; Perry opening up Japan in the mid 19th century; the age of colonialism; war in the Pacific 1941-1945; the last five maps will deal with post-war events and will examine the present power of the Pacific rim.

Book Information

Series: Hist Atlas

Paperback: 128 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books (September 1, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0140254285

ISBN-13: 978-0140254280

Product Dimensions: 8.5 x 0.3 x 11 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.9 ounces

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 9 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #670,871 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #234 in [Books > History > Australia & Oceania > Australia & New Zealand](#) #260 in [Books > History > Historical Study & Educational Resources > Historical Maps](#) #1906 in [Books > Science & Math > Earth Sciences > Geography](#)

Customer Reviews

Mcevedy's achievement is to take a broad sweep of history spanning several millenia and present it in a form which is clear, scholarly and readily comprehensible to the layman. His prose style is entertaining and the text is amply complemented by the adjoining maps. It is possible to follow the historical narrative and place it in a geographical context which would normally elude the lay reader. I found this to be an excellent and most entertaining book, as good as if not better than his previous work.

I had all the other atlases of the series, and needed this one to complete the set. Now I have it.:D

The four parts of this book's contents gives a good indication of what you will find: Part 1, Setting the Scene [31 of the 120 pages to cover the period from 28 Million Years Ago until AD 1513]; Part 2. The Ocean Defined [by the Spaniards, English, Dutch, etc., of course]; Part 3. From Cook to Perry [need I say more]; and, finally, Modern Times [pp. 79-112, including much detail about WWII]. On the Meiji Restoration of 1868, the author states: ". . .as is often the case in Japan, things were not as they seemed. For instance, the idea that power was being restored to the emperor was simply humbug; the monarchy remained, as it always had been, purely ceremonial. For another, the new government was searching for a consensus and soon found it; top priority, it announced, would go to strengthening the armed forces. In a society that took great pride in its warrior caste, this was not a policy anyone could oppose. . ." And so on. If the reader is content to understand the history of Japan simply as a series of Mifune films, topped off by "The Last Samurai", this may be the book for you. Otherwise, you will recall that the monarchy was very much in control of the government at least from the days of Prince Shotoku (d. 622) until the Gempei War (1180-85). . . He/she will also recall that the samurai class lost its political and social position from the very beginning of the Meiji Restoration. Was this a "society that took great pride in its warrior caste," or was it a society that was "opened" in 1853 with Commodore Perry's guns trained on the capital, a society quite aware of how Europe (including England) and America were on a rampage to colonize the entire world, that it might bestow upon it the blessings of democracy and Christianity? What would you do if you were a Japanese in 1868? On the issue of inaccuracy, let me cite at least one, including one of the author's remarks that some might mistakenly consider amusing: "The Japanese script, on the other hand, though it looks similar to Chinese, was, from the start, an instrument for writing Japanese. There are several variants, which were combined with Chinese characters to produce the wildly complicated, often ambiguous hotch-potch that has proved so perfect a match for the Japanese psyche." (p. 23) Where does one begin to address such a confused -- and bigoted -- statement? The earliest extant document in Japanese, the Kojiki (ca. 712), for the most part used Chinese characters for their PHONETIC value to convey Japanese sounds. The Nihon shoki (720), on the other hand, was written by Japanese IN CHINESE. Eventually, the Japanese developed two parallel syllabaries (kana) -- hiragana and katakana -- to complement the use of Chinese used SEMANTICALLY, for their meaning. . . The chart on p. 23 is also misleading. The Korean column contains standard Chinese characters but should probably display the Hankul script developed by the Koreans; and the "Japanese" column is, at best, some example of specialized writing style that to most Japanese today would be simply unreadable. Ask one. For a good book on the issues, see Peter T. Daniels and William Bright, "The World's Writing Systems," New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press,

1996. 922 pages.

When I saw that Colin McEvedy had written another historical atlas, I was very excited because his atlases of Europe, Africa and North America were, for me, invaluable illuminating. However, despite his usual concise brilliance, this book was somewhat disappointing. For one thing, when I saw the title "Atlas of the Pacific", I didn't really expect it to literally be about the ocean. When one hears "Pacific", one thinks of Eastern Asia- China, Japan, Korea, etc. However, the map template for this book consists of the Pacific Ocean occupying the vast center of the map, with Asia tucked in a little corner in the upper left and North America tucked in the opposite corner. This was simply daft. This book should have focused solely on Asia. Not only was the narrative necessarily unfocused- having to cover North America, Asia, Australia and Oceania- but the maps themselves consequently suffered from a lack of detail. In addition, it is simply incredible that anyone thought this subject could have been covered in the limited pages it was given. It took McEvedy 4 books to cover the history of Europe; shouldn't the history of Asia have merited the same thorough treatment? He often is forced to have one map cover hundreds of years of history. One map covers a thousand years. In contrast, his medieval atlas of Europe never went more than about 50 years without an updated map. So, even though McEvedy's scholarship and writing were as impressive as always, the bizarrely broad scope of this work hobbled the effectiveness of this work and lessened my satisfaction.

This atlas covers what is now the United States, Canada, East Asia, and the entire Pacific. The focus of the text is very heavily on Europe and the United States. I would have liked much more focus on China, which had a huge impact on the region. It starts in 28 million years ago and finishes in 1998. The interval between maps gradually shrinks as we get into the modern era, so relatively little is pre-AD. In all, it has over 50 maps. While I don't think this book is as good as the rest, this entire series is superb and is absolutely essential for any lover of historical atlases. I have been an owner of virtually all of them for at ten years and I can honestly say that they are most read books of all that I own. The reason is their unique portability and scope. Most historical atlases are huge, heavy and expensive. They are difficult to read unless you are sitting at a table and very difficult to carry. This limits their utility (even though I still love them). Most history books have lots of dense detail about one nation or one period. Virtually none cover the broad sweep of an entire region over centuries. Like all Penguin Historical Atlases, it is small, light, reasonably priced and incredibly broad in scope. These atlases offer a unique perspective on history than is otherwise impossible to achieve. Their size and weight make them perfect for travelling. Whenever I go on a trip, I take the

most relevant ones with me. That way I can brush up on my history of the region. The format departs a bit from other Penguin Historical Atlases, which I think is a drawback. They departed from the usual map on the right and text on the left.

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